

access ways are located in canyons as well as open country. While cross country travel during hunting season does occur off some of the ways, the very rocky surface of the WSA limits extensive development of new ways. Overall effect on naturalness is slight.

B. Solitude: The WSA offers good opportunities for solitude throughout the majority of the year. In spite of the WSA's relatively flat terrain, its large size, small rims, and shallow canyons provide many isolated areas that offer opportunities for solitude. Juniper scattered throughout the northern half of the WSA also add screening to help isolate visitors.

From mid-August through the end of December solitude within the WSA is disrupted by hunters and their vehicles. The Buffalo Hills WSA is a popular antelope, deer, and game bird hunting area in Washoe County. Hunters drive virtually all of the access ways within the WSA and in some areas drive cross country in search of good hunting areas.

The WSA is periodically overflown by military aircraft which create temporary effects on solitude.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: Opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation exist throughout the WSA. The WSA is comprised of broad, open slopes and low hills of little interest for backpacking or challenging exploration.

Features of topographic interest are limited to Hole-in-the-Ground, a shallow 200' deep one-mile-wide caldera, and the canyons of the west, middle and north forks of Buffalo Creek. Hole-in-the-Ground, although appearing intriguing by its name is not a distinctive feature when actually visited on-site. The canyons of Buffalo Creek afford opportunities for exploration. Activities that occur with very low frequency are hiking, wildlife observation, nature study and geological sightseeing.

D. Special Features: The WSA does not contain any special features.

4. MANAGEABILITY

The WSA is manageable as wilderness, however, management of the area to preserve wilderness values on public land may be adversely affected by development of private lands located within the WSA. Private inholdings comprise half of Hole-in-the-Ground caldera and together with adjacent holdings total 760 acres. The Norton Place, 320 acres of private land, technically outside the WSA because it is at the end of a cherrystemmed road, is situated in open country at the head of the middle fork of Buffalo Creek and is surrounded by public lands. Private land (200 acres), in the center of Antelope Basin dominates this area popular for hunting use. These lands have potential for recreational use as hunter camps, hunting cabin development and hay production.

Management to maintain the non-motorized characteristics of wilderness would be difficult. Open terrain along the north, west and south boundaries precludes physical control of vehicle entry. The only regular public use of this area in the past has been by hunters who rely on four-wheel drive vehicles to access popular hunting areas. Nine miles of cherrystemmed roads and 26 miles of ways within the WSA would require closure and field presence to enforce the closure.

Management and coordination of military overflights will be a consideration.

5. ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCE VALUES

The geology and mineralization of the Buffalo Hills is described in the Unit Resource Analysis (URA) based on data in the Mineral Resource Inventory (MRI) files of the BLM Cal-Neva Planning Unit. The potential for oil and

gas is unknown. The WSA is not considered valuable for geothermal or sodium.

The WSA has no history or visible evidence of activities with respect to locatable minerals. There are no known mining claims in the WSA. There has been no known development of saleable minerals in the WSA. There are no oil or gas leases held within the WSA.

In 1982, Barringer Resource Inc. conducted a geochemical and geostatistic evaluation of WSA's within the BLM Winnemucca District included analysis of the Buffalo Hills WSA. The Barringer Report indicates a low favorability for accumulation of mineral resources in the Buffalo Hills WSA.

No U.S. Geological Survey or U.S. Bureau of Mines mineral surveys were conducted in this WSA.

6. SUMMARY OF WSA-SPECIFIC PUBLIC COMMENTS

The Eagle Lake-Cedarville Wilderness EIS that included the Buffalo Hills WSA, the Susanville District Advisory Council identified the following interested groups and resources to be represented on an eight-member Technical Review Team (TRT): livestock-adjacent land owners; wildlife-agencies-sportsmen; wilderness-environmental-dispersed recreation; minerals-energy-utilities; wild horses; motorized recreation, cultural-historical-archaeological; BLM. The team's recommendation of nonsuitable was supported by the Susanville District Advisory Council and by BLM and is the recommended action for this WSA.

Issues analyzed by the TRT and in the EIS were: a wilderness complex where five adjacent WSA's separated only by boundary roads including Buffalo Hills WSA would be managed as a wilderness complex inclusive of the road; the quality of the wilderness resource and how much was appropriate to be preserved and managed as wilderness; concern that wilderness would prevent mineral development, livestock management activities and motorized recreation access for hunting; and concern that wilderness would limit management of wild horses and burro populations.

306 comments were received that addressed this WSA specifically or as part of general comments on all WSA's in the draft EIS. Of the 306 comments received, 11 were oral comments received at public hearings held in Cedarville and Susanville, California and in Reno, Nevada. The remaining 295 comments received were written. 32 respondents supported all wilderness, 263 supported no wilderness recommended by BLM and one supported partial-wilderness. Ten respondents supported more wilderness than was addressed in the draft EIS.

Those favoring wilderness cited the area's natural character, opportunities for primitive recreation, opportunities for solitude and geological value of Hole-in-the-Ground within the WSA. Inclusion of the area in the national wilderness preservation system as a representative of volcanic land forms in the desert shrub ecosystem was also cited.

Those opposed to wilderness cited concern that despite livestock's grandfathered uses in the wilderness act, livestock management activities, particularly motorized access for water facility inspection, maintenance and sheep camp movement would be restricted. Restrictions on or prohibition of development of new springs and reservoirs, was also cited as reasons for opposition to wilderness. Others opposed to wilderness cited the elimination of mineral development in designated wilderness as a reason without reference to specific mineral values within the WSA.

The following local and state agencies supported the BLM no-wilderness alternative: Lassen County, (California) Board of Supervisors; Nevada County, (California) Supervisor Joel Gustafson; The State of Nevada through the Nevada Clearinghouse; The Nevada Division of State Parks; The Nevada Department of Minerals; The California Department of Fish and Game.